Eastern's Makes President's Honor Roll

Willimantic, CT -- Eastern Connecticut State University has been named to the 2009 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll, the highest federal recognition a college or university can receive for its commitment to volunteering, service-learning and civic engagement. Eastern joined such other Connecticut institutions as Wesleyan University, Fairfield University, Sacred Heart University and the University of Connecticut on the honor roll. Eastern also earned the designation in 2008.

Honorees are chosen based on a series of selection factors including the scope and innovation of service projects, percentage of student participation in service activities, incentives for service and the extent to which the school offers academic service-learning courses.

"We are honored to earn a place on the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll," said Eastern President Elsa M. Núñez. "We thank the Corporation for National and Community Service for recognizing the many contributions our faculty and students are making in our local and state communities. Social responsibility and engagement are two of our University's core values and we continue to seek ways to expand student opportunities for engagement in the community."

This past fall, Eastern opened its new Center for Community Engagement, which links students and faculty to community needs and provides improved coordination of volunteer and service learning projects. More than 4,000 hours were contributed to the local community in the fall, doubling the service hours from the previous year. Projects ranged from developing a website for the Covenant Soup Kitchen to writing business plans for local Latino-owned businesses to tutoring children in local after-school programs.

Agencies assisted include the No Freeze Shelter, the Joshua Trust land conservancy, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program and Big Brother/Big Sister, among others. Among the more unusual projects: a class of Eastern freshmen created a short civics course for third- and fourth-grade students at Sweeney Elementary School in Willimantic, and a group of Environmental Earth
Science majors will be building a wind/solar energy system for a high school in Lucea, Jamaica during Spring Break 2010.

The Corporation for National and Community Service, which administers the annual Honor Roll award, recognized more than 700 colleges and universities for their impact on issues from poverty and homelessness to environmental justice. On campuses across the country, thousands of students joined their faculty to develop innovative programs and projects to meet local needs using the skills gained in their classrooms. Business students served as consultants to budget-strapped nonprofits and businesses, law students volunteered at legal clinics and dozens of others organized anti-hunger campaigns.

"Congratulations to Eastern and its students for their dedication to service and commitment to improving their local communities," said Patrick Corvington, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service. "Our nation's students are a critical part of the equation and vital to our efforts to tackle the most persistent challenges we face. They have achieved impactful results and demonstrated the value of putting knowledge into practice to help renew America through service."

College students make a significant contribution to the volunteer sector; in 2009, 3.16 million students performed more than 300 million hours of service, according to the Volunteering in America study released by the Corporation. Each year, the Corporation invests more than $150 million in fostering a culture of service on college campuses through grants awarded by its programs; the education awards that AmeriCorps members receive at the conclusion of their term of service to pay for college; and through support of training, research, recognition, and other initiatives to spur college service.

The Corporation oversees the Honor Roll in collaboration with the Department of Education, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Campus Compact and the American Council on Education.